



9 Steps to achieving your goals

Research by Professor Damon Burton at the University of Idaho reveals that people who use goal-setting effectively have lower levels of stress and anxiety, have higher levels of performance, are more confident, have improved concentration, and are generally happier.

The following checklist will help you set and achieve your goals.

■ **Identify clear, specific goals.** Forming specific, reachable goals is often the toughest step — but it's the most important one. What is a goal? It's something you want to do, have, or become that's important enough to justify the time and effort you'll spend achieving it. To help identify what's important to you, first make a list of your values. Ask yourself: What's really important to me right now? What do I want to be doing in the near future? What do I want to achieve? Strive for a balance of work and life values. For example, you might include on your list items like: advancement, volunteer work, recognition, family, etc.

■ **Prioritize the list.** Rank the items from most important to least important.

■ **Focus on your top goal(s).** Write down the steps and tasks involved in reaching each goal. Then, ask yourself: What do I need to do to accomplish this goal in the next year/six months? Be sure to set a realistic timeframe for reaching the goal(s).

■ **List the benefits and/or rewards** of reaching your goal(s).

■ **Seek harmony.** When goal-setting, it's important to create harmony or alignment between goals and values. Otherwise, your goals can

become unbalanced and demotivating — for instance, working too hard on your goal of becoming a customer service trainer may negatively impact a high-priority value, such as spending more time with family.

■ **Work backward.** Looking at your overall task list for reaching an individual goal, break items into monthly tasks. Next, break down monthly items into weekly, then daily tasks.

■ **Identify your resources.** Write down those you already have access to, as well as any you will need.

■ **Identify potential obstacles.** When making long-term goals (say, six months), more than likely, difficulties or obstacles will emerge. Take some time to think about potential hurdles that might pop up, as well as ideas on how you might handle or overcome those obstacles.

■ **Identify your motivational weaknesses.** What might get in the way of achieving your goal? Do you lack necessary knowledge? Do you tend to procrastinate? Are you coming up on a particularly busy season at work? What steps will you need to take to overcome these difficulties?

■ **Review your plan.** Are your steps and timeframes achievable? Revise, if necessary.

